



NEWS RELEASE

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Tucson Border Patrol Testing Air-Powered Pepperball Launchers

TUCSON, Ariz - In a move aimed at enhancing both officer and migrant safety, the Tucson Border Patrol recently began distributing the first of 45 air-powered pepperball launchers to its agents in the field. The pepperball launchers provide officers with another non-lethal means to respond to violent situations. The launchers employ compressed air to fire plastic pellets containing a powdered, hot pepper-like chemical (Oleoresin Capsicum) that burst on impact causing irritation of the nose, eyes, and mouth.

"These devices are yet another tool our agents will be able to use to safely address potentially dangerous situations, such as rocking assaults," said David V. Aguilar, Chief Patrol Agent of the Tucson Sector. "The implementation of this device further underscores the scope of our ongoing commitment to border safety and security, for border area residents and agents alike."

The introduction of the pepperball launchers began last week with six being distributed to three stations. An additional 39 launchers will be deployed in the near future. All of the officers using the new device must receive special training.

The Border Patrol is committed to providing agents with an array of non-lethal options to defuse violent situations. All Border Patrol Agents are equipped with collapsible steel batons and pepper spray, but those devices are only effective at relatively close range. The primary advantage of the pepperball pellets is that they can be used both at close range and at distances up to 100 feet.

The pepperball launchers are already being employed by the Border Patrol in San Diego, El Centro and Yuma. In San Diego, where the devices were introduced last July, they have been used on 28 occasions and actually discharged 8 times. In all cases, the incidents ended without injury to agents or migrants.

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